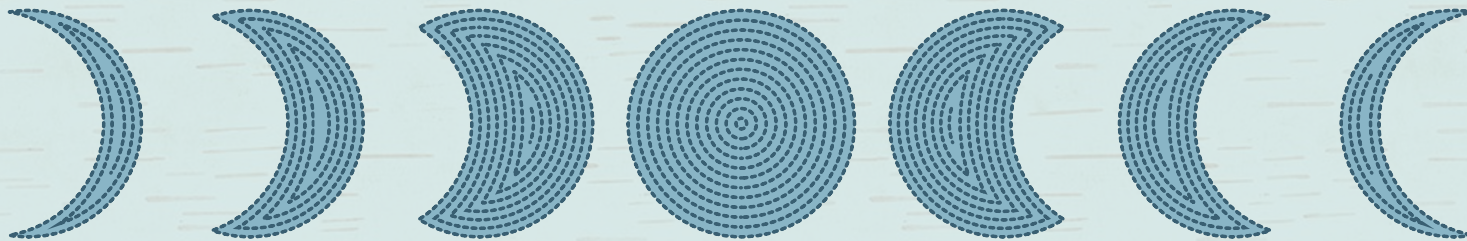




Embracing Moon Time: Honouring Our Cycle



Our ancestors understood that menstruation is a reflection of the moon's cycles, just as nature has its own rhythms and cycles. Unfortunately, colonization has contributed to the stigmatization of menstruation.

For Métis people, menstruation is not something to hide. Moon time is a sacred time for rest, reflection, and spiritual renewal, connecting us to the rhythms of nature and the seasons. By embracing the significance of menstruation, we can reconnect and honour our bodies.

- ✳ **Early in the cycle:** there is a gradual increase in estrogen levels.
- ✳ **Preparation for ovulation:** the uterine lining thickens and grows to receive a fertilized egg.
- ✳ **Cycle continuation:** if the egg is not fertilized, estrogen drops and progesterone increases.
- ✳ **Menstruation:** the uterus sheds its lining, which is full of blood from the cycle.

Culturally respectful care means understanding and honouring these traditions while respecting the sacredness of this time.

Disclaimer: These worksheets are for educational purposes only. For medical advice, consult a trusted healthcare provider who respects your cultural values and needs.

What is Period Poverty?

Period Poverty is a health dilemma that affects many individuals. Period poverty refers to the lack of access to menstrual products, education, and the ability to manage menstruation in safe and supportive environments. This can prevent and affect individuals from fully participating in school, work, and community life. Period poverty can happen because of different social and environmental issues that connect with who you are and your personal circumstances.

✳ Not all individuals who menstruate identify as women; some gender-diverse individuals also menstruate.

Ceremonies

Many Indigenous cultures have specific ceremonies to mark a girl's transition into womanhood. These "Coming into Womanhood" ceremonies were often female-specific and held by female members of the girl's family. There are many variations of this important ceremony, which may include fasting from berries, learning women's teachings, female body processes, washing their hair with cedar water, and receiving gifts from the women in attendance.

Source: The Art of Storytelling published by Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association, 2008. Researched and compiled by Linda Boudreau- Semaganis with A.Adrian Wolfleg.

Moon Time Teaching

Grandmother Moon plays an important role in maintaining balance in the universe. She guides the ocean tides, the changing seasons, the mating cycles of animals, and many other natural rhythms. She also influences menstrual cycles, which align with the moon's phases—the waxing and waning. Many teachings speak to the power of the menstrual cycle as a time of cleansing and renewal, and preparation for the possibility of creating life. The waxing moon reflects the building of energy, while the waning moon symbolizes release—both connected to different stages of the menstrual cycle.

One teaching is that each cycle is a preparation for the possibility of creating life. This natural process is deeply connected to the flow of water, and when someone is pregnant, they carry the baby in water, just as Grandmother Moon carries the waters of the earth. Because of this, those who menstruate are often honoured as water carriers, holding a sacred connection to both life and the land.

These teachings honour the connection between the moon, water, and the life-giving power held within our bodies—regardless of gender. They remind us of the importance of respecting all bodies and the diverse ways people experience their reproductive health journeys.

Source: The Art of Storytelling published by Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association, 2008. Researched and compiled by Linda Boudreau-Semaganis with A.Adrian Wolfleg.



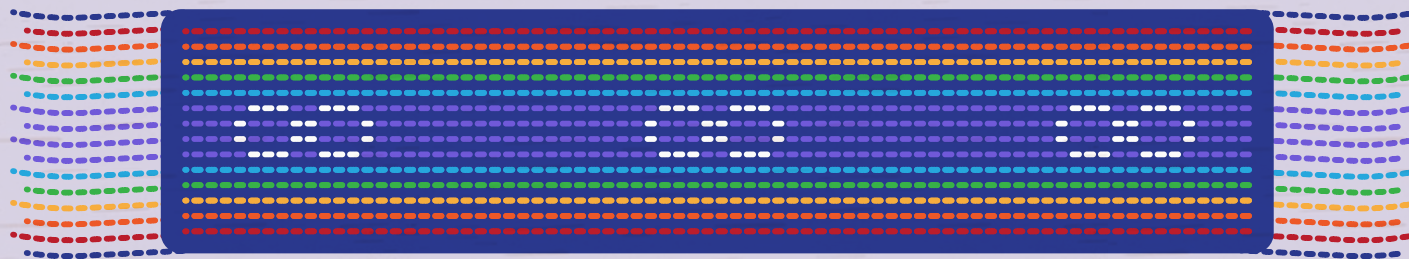
Incorporating Two-Spirit Experiences in Teachings and Ceremonies

While specific “Coming into Moon Time” ceremonies may not be widely practiced in all Métis communities today, many families continue to uphold private, land-based, or kitchen table teachings that honour this important life transition. These teachings are often led by aunties, grandmothers, and Knowledge Holders. They may include Métis-specific practices such as using traditional medicinal plants, sewing or crafting, and sharing stories reflecting Métis values and relationships to land and water.

Importantly, not all people who experience menstruation identify as women. Many gender-diverse and Two-Spirit people also experience these transitions, and it is important to recognize and honour their space within ceremonial practices. Historically, Two-Spirit people in many Indigenous Nations—including the Métis—have held sacred roles and spiritual responsibilities. In many communities, they continue to lead or participate in teachings and ceremonies that reflect their unique spiritual and cultural gifts.

Incorporating Two-Spirit and gender-diverse experiences into Moon Time teachings is essential for ensuring cultural safety and inclusion. This may look like:

- ✳ Creating ceremonial spaces that are open and affirming to all menstruating individuals, regardless of gender identity.
- ✳ Uplifting Two-Spirit Knowledge Holders to share teachings or lead ceremonies.
- ✳ Acknowledging the diverse roles that Two-Spirit people have historically held—as healers, mediators, and carriers of both masculine and feminine knowledge.
- ✳ Reframing language away from gender-exclusive terms (e.g., “Coming into Womanhood”) and toward inclusive language like “Coming into Moon Time” or “Menstrual Honouring Ceremony.”



Period Stigma and Period Poverty

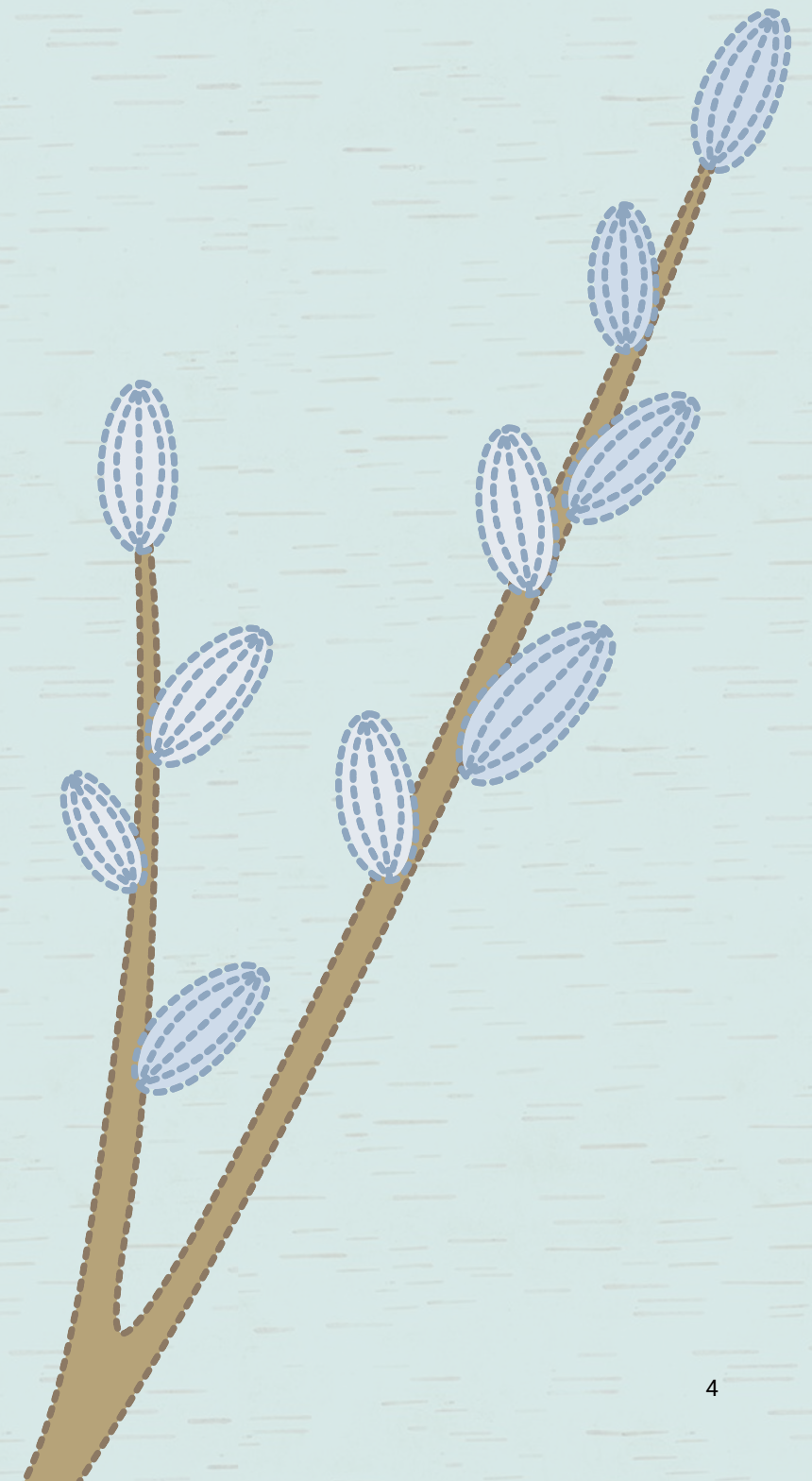
Talking about periods openly helps break the stigma. Many people still feel shame or embarrassment about menstruation because of colonial ideas that say it's dirty or something to hide. But periods are natural, and everyone deserves to feel safe, respected, and supported during their cycle.

For some, periods can include one or more days of heavy bleeding. These days can make it hard to go to school, work, or take care of daily tasks. This is why access to period products is so important. Many people experience period poverty, which means they can't always afford pads, tampons, cups, or other supplies. This can have a big impact on health, confidence, and quality of life.

Period poverty can prevent and affect individuals from fully participating in school, work, and community life. It can result from a series of overlapping social and environmental factors, along with the different ways you identify.

There are also different ways people choose to manage their periods. For example, practices like free bleeding, often stigmatized through colonial lenses, can also be a natural and empowering choice for those with lighter flows.

If someone is dealing with heavy flows or painful periods, there are medical treatments that can help. Métis people are encouraged to speak with a trusted healthcare provider to learn about their options. Choosing what works best for your body is an important part of body sovereignty—having the right to make informed choices about your health.



Understanding Period Poverty and Its Impact on Métis Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Kin

Have you ever thought about how it would feel if you didn't have enough money to buy the things you need, like food or personal items? What if you didn't have access to basic things that are necessary for your well-being, like menstrual products? This is what period poverty means—when someone cannot afford or does not have access to the things they need to manage their period, like pads, tampons, or even clean water and a safe place to take care of themselves.

Period poverty can affect Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ kin, and it's important to understand these experiences.

Colonial and Systemic Inequalities.

Métis communities, like other Indigenous peoples in Canada, have faced many challenges through history which has resulted in disproportionate poverty rates, limited access to education, and inadequate healthcare. These systemic issues can exacerbate the effects of period poverty, as financial constraints may prevent access to menstrual products or proper sanitation facilities. Métis people, especially those in remote or rural

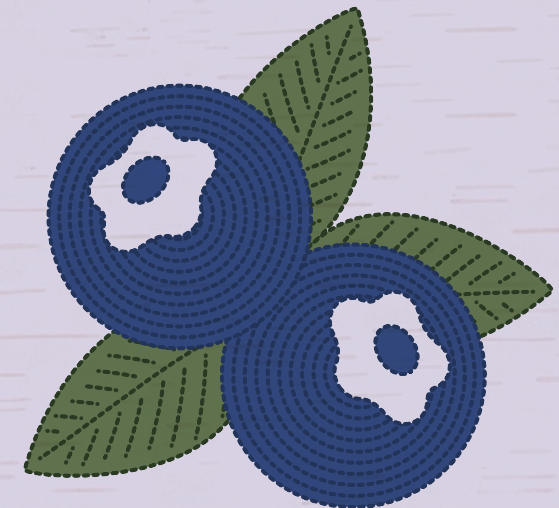
areas, may struggle to find affordable, culturally appropriate period products due to isolation or lack of local services. If you can't easily get the products you need, this can make everyday life much harder, especially when it comes to something as personal as menstruation.

Impact on Mental Health and Well-being.

Period poverty can lead to increased stress and anxiety, especially for those who are already facing discrimination, violence, or marginalization due to their gender identity or Indigenous status. Imagine you're at school or work, but you don't have the right menstrual products. You're worried and stressed about it, and this can make it harder to focus or even leave you feeling embarrassed. For Métis 2SLGBTQQIA+ kin, the social stigma attached to menstruation may be compounded by issues of gender dysphoria, alienation from family or community, and barriers to accessing health care and menstrual products that suit their gender identity.

Lack of Access to Culturally Relevant Support, Barriers to Accessing Help.

In many Métis communities, there may be a lack of healthcare providers who understand the specific needs of Métis people or those who are part of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. This means that even if someone is struggling with period poverty, they might not always know where to turn for help. Access to menstrual products that align with cultural practices and gender identities may not always be available. For some Métis people, there might also be a lack of community programs or services that can provide the specific products or support they need, like eco-friendly options or culturally appropriate resources.



Living in Remote Areas Can Make it Harder.

Period poverty can be a particular challenge for those living in rural and remote communities as people may not be able to access menstruation products when needed, and transportation to larger urban centers or the internet for online resources can be difficult. Moreover, remote locations often lack the infrastructure to ensure reliable access to necessary sanitary products or health services. Accessing things like menstrual products can be even harder. This makes period poverty even worse because people may feel stuck and unable to get the basic supplies that everyone deserves.

Barriers to Education and Employment.

Period poverty may interfere with our ability to participate fully in education or the workforce. Without access to menstrual products, individuals may miss school or work, leading to educational and economic disadvantages that perpetuate cycles of poverty. For Two-Spirit individuals, the societal rejection or lack of understanding of their gender identity can compound the stigma surrounding menstruation, creating additional barriers to education and employment.

Intersectionality: How Gender and Identity Play a Role.

For Métis girls, women, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ kin, period poverty is complicated by their gender identity or sexual orientation. Two-Spirit people—those who identify as both masculine and feminine—may face different experiences related to menstruation. Transgender and non-binary individuals may struggle with feelings of discomfort or dysphoria around their period, which can make it even harder to talk about their needs or get support.



“Many people face barriers to accessing menstrual products or educational materials because of financial limitations and/or harmful social norms and attitudes surrounding menstruation.”

[Government of Canada](#)

There are many things that can be done to help end period poverty for Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ kin. To address period poverty in Métis communities, we must take an approach that is culturally informed, community-driven, and inclusive of all gender identities. Some steps that could help include:

Menstrual Education and Awareness: Provide accessible and culturally relevant education about menstruation. By learning more about period poverty and understanding the cultural and emotional aspects of menstruation, we can help break the stigma and create safer, more caring spaces for everyone. It is essential that people have the information they need to make informed decisions.

Community-Based Initiatives: Communities can come together to support those in need by organizing local initiatives to distribute menstrual products, or setting up programs in schools and community centers that offer free products for those who can't afford them.

Culturally-Sensitive Health Services: Health services should be inclusive of Métis traditions and the needs of 2SLGBTQQIA+ kin. This includes making sure that everyone can access the right products, whether it's eco-friendly options or items that meet their specific gender and cultural needs. To ensure healthcare providers can offer culturally-relevant care throughout all stages of the menstrual cycle, they must be educated about Métis cultural practices and beliefs related to menstruation. This knowledge helps support more respectful, informed, and affirming care for Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

Policy Advocacy: Advocate for policy changes that ensure equitable access to menstrual products are provided to everyone who needs them, especially in communities where access is limited. This includes making sure that government programs support those who face financial hardship. This includes addressing broader issues like poverty, housing, and healthcare.

Environmental Sustainability: Include Indigenous perspectives on sustainability by promoting eco-friendly menstrual products that align with Métis values, ensuring they are accessible, affordable, and locally available.

